(d) if so, the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) granted permission to Proagro Seed Co. Ltd. to conduct multi location field trials of transgenic mustard. The trials were conducted during 2001-02 in 5 States at 50 locations. The States are Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The trials include study on evaluation of agronomic performance and bio safety aspects of the transgenic seeds. So far the transgenic mustard has not been approved for the commercial use in India.

Promotion of agriculture sector

3349. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state the details of measures Government have taken to provide easy availability of credit and other inputs, infrastructure facilities for development of agri-business industries, and freeing movement of agro-produce so as to promote the agriculture sector in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): Govenment of India through various Central sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes ensures supply of inputs like certified seeds, soil nutrients, pesticides, agricultural implements etc. for enhancement of production and productivity in agriculture sector. Till January 2002, 214.83 lakh Kisan Credit Cards have been issued, providing flexibility and security in the flow of credit to the farmers. Infrastructure in rural areas is being strengthened through Rural Infrastructure Development fund, rural electrification programme, Pradhan Mantri Sadak Yojana. There are the specific schemes for rural godowns and storages. Dissemination of technology and extension services are revitalized through strengthening of Krishi Vigyan Kendras. For enhancing irrigation facilities, the Government is implementing specific programmes like watershed development scheme, on farm- water management, command area development and various other minor and major irrigation projects. Under the Rural Employment Generation Programmes, margin money assistance is provided for setting up Khadi and village industries including agri-business industries in rural areas. Assistance is also provided for food processing industrial estates / food parks and for infrastructure for cold chain facilities and preservation and processing of food including fish. *Vide* a Central order dated 15.2.2002, any dealer can freely buy, stock, sell, transport,

distribute, dispose, acquire, use or consume any quantity of wheat paddy / rice, coarse grains, sugar, edible oilseeds and edible oils and shall not require any license or permit therefor.

Decline in value of agricultural imports

3350. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, according to the latest Economic Survey, value of agricultural imports have declined during the last year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have come across any shortcomings in using the credit cards by the six million farmers, who availed this facility; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) As per the latest Economic Survey, the total import of agricultural products has declined from US $ 2919 million in 1998-99 to US $ 2858 million in 1999-2000 and further to US $ 1858 in the year 2000-01. The share of agricultural imports in the total imports of the country has also declined from 6.9% in 1998-99 to 3.7% in 2000-01. The decline is mainly a result of decrease in import of cereals and sugar.

(c) and (d) The Kisan Credit Card Scheme is a hastle free mechanism for dispensation of crop loans with a validity of 3 years. The Scheme has found wide acceptability among the users. No specific shortcoming in the implementation of scheme has been reported.

However, *inter alia*, the following constraints were observed in implementation of KCC Scheme:

- Some banks, particularly cooperative banks have not been extending the facility of frequent drawls to the cardholders, thus curtailing the very basic facility extended under the KCC. NABARD immediately brought to the notice of the concerned authorities, wherever such instances were reported, to rectify the shortcomings.
- Some of the State Governments are reportedly levying stamp duty for loans under KCC and not for normal crop loans. The matter